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Reflections:

A Student Response Journal for...

*One Flew Over
the Cuckoo's Nest
by Ken Kesey*

written by Jack Turner

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To The Teacher

In order to allow the teacher maximum flexibility in his or her approach, we have grouped the prompts by sections. The teacher may, therefore, assign specific prompts or allow the students to select one or more prompts from each section

For *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, we also have these materials:

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To The Student

Although we may read a novel, play, or work of non-fiction for enjoyment, each time we read one, we are building and practicing important basic reading skills. In our ever-more complex society, in which reading has become more and more crucial for success, this, in itself, is an important reason to spend time reading for enjoyment.

Some readers, however, are able to go beyond basic reading techniques and are able to practice higher thinking skills by reflecting on what they have read and how what they read affects them. It is this act of reflection—that is, stopping to think about what you are reading—that this journal is attempting to encourage.

To aid you, we have included writing prompts for each section; however, if you find something that you wish to respond to in the book more compelling than our prompts, you should write about that. We hope you enjoy reading this book and that the act of responding to what you have read increases this enjoyment.

After you read the indicated sections, choose the questions to which you will respond. Keep in mind that there are no right or wrong answers to these prompts, and there is no one direction in which you must go.

[illegible]

Background

1. Ken Kesey wrote *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* while working part-time as a night attendant in the mental ward of a hospital. Some of the book was written while he was supposedly on the job, and most of the characters are based on patients with whom he held extensive conversations. (At the time, he was also a student at Stanford University.)

Acting as his supervisor, write a letter of reprimand telling him to concentrate on his work and stop his creative writing while at the hospital; list several reasons why he should follow your advice.

2. While at Stanford, before and during the writing of the novel, Kesey took part in experiments involving several hallucinogenic drugs, including LSD and mescaline (derived from the peyote cactus). Free write for fifteen minutes on the use and abuse of drugs in our society, keeping in mind that some mental patients have been hospitalized because of the effects of drugs on their brains. Do not neglect the positive uses of drugs, either. Try to write about both sides of the issue.

Part 1

3. The narrator of the novel, Chief Bromden, often writes as if he is insane or under the influence of a hallucinogenic drug. For example, near the beginning of the book, he says, "They start the fog machine again and it's snowing down cold and white all over me like skim milk, so thick I might even be able to hide in it if they didn't have a hold on me."

Explain to a fellow student what you think the imaginary fog represents, who "they" are, and what mental problems Bromden may have.

4. The Chief's narration begins in the present tense ("They're out there"), then he starts using mostly the past tense shortly after the start of part 2 ("The way the Big Nurse acted so confident . . . that worried me for a while"), but occasionally he narrates a scene in the present tense. In an entry in your journal, discuss the effect this shifting of tenses has on the reader. For example, do the scenes narrated in the present tense seem more (or less) exciting than the ones narrated in the past tense? Why do you think Kesey chose this shifting style of narration?
5. Write a short story in which you use an experimental narrative style of your choice. Try something different from what you have experienced in your readings. The story may come from your imagination or actual events in your life, and be prepared to share the story with the rest of the class if you choose to.

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6. Write a letter to a friend who has (in your imagination) been committed to a mental hospital. Try to assure him or her that you understand the situation and that you are hopeful for the future. Ask well-reasoned questions about the environment and the treatment, while being diplomatic and not upsetting your friend by being too pushy. The object of your letter should be to offer hope and comfort while finding out how the friend feels about the situation and how he or she is being treated by the administration.
7. Investigate the conditions and treatment at a local mental institution by means of interviews, news articles, and/or personal observation. (Be sure to get approval from your parents or guardians, school officials, and the hospital administration before doing any in-person, “primary” research.) Then write an article for your school’s newspaper on what you find out. Try to delve into facts as well as stating your opinions based on research. Give the reader a full picture of the hospital, its staff, the patients, their treatment, and your feelings about the hospital and doing research for the article. If you are not able to do in-person research, just imagine a non-existent hospital and make up the story as you go along, labeling it upfront as a fictional article based on your imagination.
8. Explain the Chief’s vocabulary to someone new to the ward (a classmate can play this part). Take the role of an inmate and define such terms as Combine, “fog,” Acute, Chronic, Wheeler, Walker, and Vegetable, as the Chief uses them in his personal, somewhat distorted context. Add any other words he uses that you think a new arrival would want or need to know, such as Shock Shop and Disturbed. Together, create a glossary for the new ward member.
9. One of the most compelling and emotional characters is the young man who stutters, Billy Bibbit. Imitate the personality of Billy and write a letter to an advice columnist, asking for help with your problems. Use as much detail and family history as possible, even if you must invent some to form an interesting letter.

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10. McMurphy brags about the fact that he is a gambler and admits that one of the main reasons he has come to the hospital is to make money playing cards and making other bets. "I'm a gambling fool," he says by way of introduction, then sings part of a song: "whenever I meet with a deck of cards I lays . . . my money . . . down."

What is your opinion of gambling? In your journal, free write for twenty minutes on the subject. Keep in mind that gambling is not only a form of entertainment and a way to make money but can also be a way of life, in the sense that some people take many risks that have nothing to do with cards or casinos. Explore your feelings on gambling in particular and gambling in general.

11. Write a letter to the editor of your school paper or the local newspaper in which you argue for or against legalized gambling. Note in detail the advantages and disadvantages for the public, and use details either from your personal knowledge or research as to what really happens when gambling is legal in a community, such as Atlantic City or Las Vegas. You can also bring in the issues of slot machines and lotteries being legal in many states.
12. The Chief imagines that Nurse Ratched is a machine, and he thinks that the Combine puts little machines inside people's heads to make them all conform. Although this imagery is based on the character's delusions, Kesey is making a point about the way many people behave as if they were machines programmed by the authorities.

Compose a letter to the author in which you agree with him or disagree, based on your observations of those around you. If you agree, then congratulate him and offer examples to back up his point. If you disagree, offer detailed examples to refute his point, while at the same time being as diplomatic and objective as possible. Your object is not to upset the author but to cause him to think about what he has written in terms of the society that you are a part of every day. Does his view of conformity as bad and restrictive help or hurt those who agree with him? How so?

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13. One of the subtopics of the novel is the power that women can hold over men. Dr. Sigmund Freud famously asked, "What do women want?" and Geoffrey Chaucer, in *The Canterbury Tales*, has his Wife of Bath argue that women want "sovereignty" over men. In a journal entry, discuss this conflict as fully as possible and prepare to share your thoughts with classmates if you wish. You may or may not refer to Big Nurse and McMurphy. The objective of this assignment is for you to explore your feelings on the subject by providing details of how you feel and why you feel that way. Who has the most power in our society: men or women? What is that power based on? Is society better off this way, or should there be a shift in power to the other side? Why or why not? What would be some of the results of such a change in power?
14. One major conflict between McMurphy and Big Nurse concerns whether she is going to allow the men to watch the World Series on TV. At first the patients vote against the idea, hoping to win favor in the eyes of Nurse Ratched, but soon afterward they come around to McMurphy's side and vote to watch the Series. However, Big Nurse will not give in and shuts off the power to the TV.

Write a dialogue between you and someone in authority regarding a similar conflict you have had or are having. The conflict may or may not involve what you choose to watch on TV; it can be any conflict with authority. Prepare to present the dialogue to the class if you wish. Be sure not to include demeaning or blatantly offensive statements that could hurt the feelings of others or get you into trouble with your teacher, the school administration, or any other authority figures that could cause you serious problems. At the same time, try to make your dialogue realistic and convincing, taking both sides of an issue and presenting an interesting discussion.

Part 2

15. The staff has a meeting in which they talk about McMurphy, his actions, and his future. Nurse Ratched argues that he is not extraordinary but a normal man, who will eventually conform to the rules, given enough time. “He is simply a man,” she says, “and no more. . . . Given a few more days, I have a very strong feeling that he will prove this . . . [and] back down the moment there is any real danger to him personally.”

Imagine that one of your friends makes a point of being a nonconformist (and maybe this is actually the case). Write a letter to that friend in which you try to convince him or her to abide by the rules and conform to expectations more often. The purpose of your letter is not to condemn or criticize but to try to make him or her see the advantages of your point of view. Conversely, you could write a letter to a friend who is conforming too much and suggest that he or she relax more and try to be more creative, to have more fun. In either case, your tone should be helpful rather than confrontational. Why not include some humor in your letter? After all, the best letters tend to sound as if the writer is conversing one-to-one instead of writing.

16. McMurphy has quickly taken over the leadership position of “Bull Goose Loony,” which had previously belonged to Harding. In Part 2, the Chief is looking out the window and notices a flock of geese flying in their characteristic V-shape, with the leader confidently guiding them where they need to go.

Write a report on geese behavior; geese are the perfect example of teamwork in their flight. In your report, you may or may not relate this behavior to McMurphy and his followers. That is your choice. The report can simply be based on the concept of geese and teamwork, or it can be a comparison and contrast between the society of geese and that of the patients in the novel.

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17. Choose a section of the novel to rewrite clearly. In other words, translate the Chief's narration in a section that is especially hallucinatory and full of unusual imagery. Most of these sections are in the first part of the book, before McMurphy has had an opportunity to communicate with and improve the Chief's condition. However, you may find others in part 2, when the Chief has a relapse following McMurphy's decision to follow the rules and bow to Big Nurse's authority in hopes of getting released from confinement.
18. When the tension is building before McMurphy breaks Big Nurse's window, the Chief hears a ringing sound in his head that reminds him of "standing in the cold fall Friday night out on a football field, waiting for the ball to be kicked and the game to get going. The ringing would build and build . . . then the kick would come and it would be gone and the game would be on its way."

How do you feel when tension is building before a big event, whether it is in sports or in some other arena of life? Describe the situation in a paragraph, including the significance of the event, the build-up you experience, and how you feel after the tension is relieved.

19. Write a short story regarding a special moment you experienced having to do with sports. The story can involve you or a team you were rooting for or against. You do not have to have been a participant, or even an observer; the story simply needs to have something to do with a sport or competition, a game, someone who plays sports, etc.

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20. One way that McMurphy does not conform is by refusing to perform duties to Big Nurse's specifications or by taunting her while performing chores. For example, he leaves behind obscene messages for her after he has cleaned the toilet area.

Explain your feelings on the subject of profanity in a letter to your school newspaper. What are the causes and effects of obscenity in society, especially in high school? Should it be more tightly controlled or not? Why? How could it be controlled better, if you think it needs to be? When, where, and how should free speech be restricted? These are examples of topics and directions your letter could take, but the thesis and the argument behind it is up to you and should be based on your observations at your particular school.

21. Nurse Ratched uses Electroshock Therapy (EST) as punishment for bad behavior, sometimes with disastrous results. For example, one of the "vegetables" receives an overdose of EST and dies. The Chief has been given more than 200 shock treatments, and McMurphy is forcibly shocked even though there is no firm evidence that he is insane, much less in need of EST.

Electroshock Therapy is still used in some mental hospitals today, especially in the treatment of severe depression. Electrodes are attached to the patient's temples, and a shock is delivered, which mimics an epileptic seizure, causes a temporary improvement in the patient's symptoms, and also erases some short-term memory.

Create a diary entry as if you were the Chief describing a visit to the "Shock Shop," where he and other patients are given shock therapy. Try to imitate his style of narration while conveying to the reader exactly how EST is administered and why the psychiatrists at the hospital believe it is good for certain patients.

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22. McMurphy is amazed to learn that most of the patients in the ward with him are voluntarily committed; they can leave any time they wish. Even though psychotherapy and/or psychological counseling are almost always effective in dealing with serious problems (chronic grief, depression, compulsions, manias, phobias, etc.), there is a social stigma attached. In other words, many people view the patients as weak or demented in some way even after they have risen above their problems to become positive, contributing members of society. This stigma can cause regression instead of continued mental health for those who have to face such prejudice and ridicule on a regular basis.

Compose an essay in which you argue for full acceptance for those who have been treated for mental illness and those who have simply been to counseling to overcome problems in their lives that they cannot deal with alone. After all, prejudice is wrong no matter what it's based on. If you do research to back up your ideas, be sure to list and cite all your sources fully and correctly.

23. Write Nurse Ratched or Dr. Spivey a letter on behalf of one of the inmates. Plead for more mercy and understanding regarding the inmate. Imagine that the man you're writing about has been in touch with you and reported some of the abuses that the inmates have suffered at the hands of the orderlies and Nurse Ratched. Be specific but remember also to be diplomatic in pleading your case; you want to win over the person you're writing to. Perhaps you are a close relative or a long-time friend of the inmate, and you know him and his situation well enough to give some important background as to his character and behavior before he was admitted to the hospital.

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24. When Cheswick finds out that McMurphy is conforming to the rules so that he can impress Big Nurse and get her approval for his release, Cheswick is so depressed and disillusioned that he commits suicide. Later in the novel, Billy Bibbit will make the same irreversible choice. Well-known columnist Dear Abby once wrote that suicide is “a permanent solution to a temporary problem.”

In a letter to an advice columnist, ask for help in dealing with a friend or relative who may be suicidal. Use your imagination and do not include private or embarrassing details about real individuals; use false names, if necessary, to identify the people you are talking about. Make your letter straightforward, concise, and urgent in tone.

25. Write a newspaper article on teen suicide for a local magazine. Some sociologists and psychologists have referred to the problem as an epidemic. Why do you think teens resort to killing themselves so often? What are some measures that could be taken to prevent these tragic deaths? To make your article more interesting, you could use real details from real suicides that have been in the news. Try to quote parents, other relatives, and friends who have lost teens to suicide. Remember that your article could make the difference in someone's life, could make him or her choose to live instead of dying young. Therefore, your tone should be serious and your facts should be solid, moving, and convincing.
26. Compose an urgent email to the state authorities over the poor conditions you have witnessed at the mental hospital where the novel is set. Pretend you were visiting a relative of yours and saw some of the antics of McMurphy, his supporters, and Big Nurse. Send the email to the State Health Department and be very specific about what you saw and the corrective actions you would like to see implemented.

Part 3

27. Chief Bromden has been pretending to be a deaf mute for many years, and no one in the hospital knows that he can hear and speak. However, he opens up to McMurphy and tells him about his childhood and about what happened to his father. "He finally just drank," says the Chief, "and every time I see him put the bottle to his mouth he don't suck out of it, it sucks out of him until he's shrunk so wrinkled and yellow even the dogs don't know him...."

In your opinion, why does the Chief choose to talk with McMurphy? What do the events he reveals say about the Chief himself? Write a paragraph or two in which you present and argue your points.

28. Have you or one of your friends ever felt the way the Chief did as a child, namely that no one was paying attention to you or your feelings, and that you may as well be a deaf mute for all your opinions mattered to the adults in your life? Compose an email to a friend or a trusted adult explaining how you feel about adults ignoring the thoughts and emotions of children as if they did not exist, as if they were deaf and could not speak.
29. Among other things, alcoholism destroyed the Chief's father. Predict the actions of an alcoholic, perhaps based on someone you know who is or could be hooked on drinking. Try to imagine what he or she will do in the future and what effects those actions will have on the individual as age takes its toll along with the chemical damage done by consuming too much alcohol on a regular basis. Use your predictions as the starting point for a letter to the individual in which you ask him or her to stop or cut back on drinking so much so often.

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30. Harding is obviously the philosopher of the group, and following the confrontation with the men at the gas station, when the patients are on their way to go fishing, he makes a startling observation: "Never before did I realize that mental illness could have the aspect of power, power. Think of it: perhaps the more insane a man is, the more powerful he could become. Hitler an example."

Using your understanding of the plot of the novel, write an essay that either proves or disproves Harding's concept. Who are the people who have the most power in the book? How are they sane or insane? What gives them more power, acting sane or acting insane? Behaving or misbehaving? Doing what's right or doing what could be seen as wrong? What do your examples and conclusions say about American society as a whole?

31. During the fishing expedition, McMurphy concedes authority, the captain's position, to the patient known as George, who surprisingly (overcoming his fearful timidity) handles the job very well. Compose a story from your personal experience that tells about a time when you or someone you know was given a position of leadership. What was the effect of being empowered and having responsibility? How did you or the person you're writing about manage the tasks and risks involved? Can you make and support a general statement regarding the positive aspects of experiencing leadership? If so, what is the statement and how would you back it up? This brief argument could be the ending or the beginning of your story.

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32. At one point, the Chief says that McMurphy “knew you can’t really be strong until you see a funny side to things.” Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Write an editorial for your school paper or the local newspaper in which you argue that there is not enough humor in life, or conversely that there is too much humor, that people in general do not take things seriously enough. Include your views on personal, emotional strength and how it is related to humor. Argue that a person is stronger or weaker based on their sense of humor or lack of it. In other words, answer the question as to whether a person could conceivably be stronger because they can laugh at a lot of things or stronger because they take almost everything in a serious manner. Use specific examples of situations and people you are familiar with, but do not invade privacy or make statements that would be personally offensive (and possibly libelous) to the people you are discussing. Try to make a convincing, objective-sounding argument to support your opinions, remembering to take into account and mention the other side of the issue.
33. Several critics have made much of Kesey’s presentation of McMurphy as a Christ figure. This “motif” of imagery is presented quite clearly throughout the novel, as when the Chief notes that “McMurphy led the twelve of us. . . .” (Christ had twelve disciples.)

How does this symbolism add or detract from the overall message of the book? In an essay, discuss the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of Kesey’s use of Christianity to portray McMurphy as both a savior and a martyr. Support your ideas with facts and examples from the book.

OR

Make a list of the religious or Christ-like images that you find in the book. In one column, list the religious section, event, or image. In a second column, list how it relates to the Bible.

Part 4

34. The Chief thinks of McMurphy as “a giant come out of the sky to save us from the Combine,” and even Nurse Ratched admits that “he seems to do things without thinking of himself at all, as if he were a martyr or a saint.” McMurphy is plainly the protagonist of the novel, yet he dies near the end. In American fiction and films, such an ending is very rare. Usually the hero is triumphant and “lives happily ever after” with the woman of his dreams. Rewrite the ending of the novel to reflect such a “normal” conclusion. Try to make your ending fit in with the events leading up to it in a logical way, so that you do not have to stretch the facts too much to fit your version.
35. Compose a poem about endings in general, not necessarily in fiction. In other words, consider how there are many conclusions in one’s life before death itself, such as break-ups, graduations, and maturity. Then, write your poem in the style you choose. Write at least fourteen lines, or write several haiku on the subject.
36. Create a diary entry from a former mental patient, such as Harding, after he has been released back into society. Try to include realistic details written in an appropriate tone for a diary, which is normally kept private, allowing for free expression and total honesty. What details would he include about his time in the hospital? Who would he blame for what happened there?
37. Harding leaves the hospital near the end of the novel. Write a resume for him that includes all the positive qualities and experiences that would belong on a resume. What kind of job would Harding be suited for? Under the heading “Employment Objectives,” write about what you think he would want to do and try to match his style of intellectual speech, without making him look bad. You may need to use your imagination to cover the period he was in the mental hospital. If you are unfamiliar with the format of a resume, use one of the templates available on the Internet, customizing it to fit your needs.

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38. McMurphy is lobotomized before his death near the end of the novel. Imagine that he had written a will and left it with the Chief. What would the will say and what would McMurphy have possessed to leave anyone? Whom do you think would be his main beneficiary? Why? Include these details and others in this make-believe will as you think Randle Patrick McMurphy would write it.
39. Three major characters die in the novel. Write a detailed obituary for one of them (Cheswick, Billy Bibbit, or McMurphy). Complete the obituary with facts from the novel as well as some from your imagination. For examples of obituaries, see your local newspaper. Copy that style as closely as you can.
40. Imagine that you are a police officer who was on the scene of Billy Bibbit's suicide or some other traumatic event in the novel, such as McMurphy's murder. Sounding as official as possible, write a wrap-up of the situation, noting details that could be used in court and adding any conclusions that you could draw from the evidence you saw and the interviews you conducted with witnesses. Your tone should be objective and professional because the document would become an important part of the case file, which would be consulted by anyone investigating the case for prosecution, defense, or historical purposes.
41. Take the ending of the novel, which is a bit uncertain, and add at least one more scene in which we see the Chief's life outside the hospital, as narrated by him. Predict his actions and reactions to what he sees as he travels, keeping in mind his past and his personality, and remembering that he may or may not be permanently cured of mental illness.

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42. Who “flew over the cuckoo’s nest”? How do you know your answer is correct? Is the title of the book appropriate or not? Write a persuasive essay that convinces readers that your opinions on these issues are correct or at least logical. Remember to use quotes and details from the novel to support your ideas.
43. Create a brief sequel chapter to the novel and delve into the future of one of the characters. You do not have to write about the Chief, so you could focus your attention on Harding and his wife, on Scanlon, or on a member of the staff, such as Washington, Big Nurse, or Dr. Spivey. You could even shift the narration and point of view. Your sequel could be a kind of epilogue to all the events that came before, or you could go in a completely new direction. Use your imagination but make the sequel somehow a logical outgrowth of the novel.

W r a p - u p

44. In Part 1, we are introduced to the patient named Ellis, who has been given shock treatments so often that he stands against the wall in a manner that resembles Jesus Christ nailed to the Cross. The method of the shock therapy at that hospital requires that patients be strapped down with their arms outstretched in this way. List and discuss briefly, in writing and later with classmates if you wish, several other allusions to Christianity (in all four parts of the book).
45. Taking on the role of Nurse Ratched, make an inventory list of your patients with a brief but detailed description of each one, including their particular illnesses, their behaviors, and their progress. Using a spreadsheet format if you wish, list at least ten patients from the novel. Do not make up information; evaluations should be as realistic as possible based on Big Nurse's viewpoint.
46. Many critics see the book as a condemnation of the treatment of the insane, as well as a comment on the definition of what insanity really is. Which characters in the novel really are medically classifiable as insane? Support your opinion with a few sentences.
47. Why would characters like Harding be voluntarily committed? Write him a letter voicing your opinion as to whether he should leave the hospital after finally understanding how the system that Ratched controls actually works.
48. Who is your favorite character in the novel? Why? Write a full description and analysis of this character. What does he or she look like? Specify some of the character's actions that reveal the inner self. What motivates the character? What future, if any, does the character have and why?

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49. Who is your least favorite character? Write a full description and analysis as detailed in the previous question.
50. A “found” poem is a poem made up entirely of phrases or quotations found in the text. Go back through the book and make up a found poem of your own. The poem could tell the reader something about someone’s emotional state, but this is not necessary; it may be totally unrelated to the action of the story, which is one of the best parts of writing a found poem.

Your poem should be at least 10 lines long. The lines do not need to rhyme, but they certainly may. You can arrange the phrases in any way you like and change the punctuation, but do not deviate from Kesey’s actual words. Give the poem a title, which may or may not come from the book. Below is an example taken entirely from pages 174-185. You will notice that the found poem has nothing to do with the plot and is nearly the opposite feeling of the weirdness and paranoia of the book.

Note to Teacher: This activity can encourage even the most reluctant student to write a poem. If more choices are needed to construct the poems, you could offer students the option of choosing words from a longer section, from more than one chapter, or you could have them work in small groups.

His Face Lit Up

He went to giggling at what he saw, about to laugh
I was just remembering
Joking
Grinning
Therapeutic value, thank you
A kind of victory, like an old chum
Men are men, braving the elements (wrecked boats and sudden storms)
Pooh-pooh—that gets a laugh
The sun is turned up brighter, half in a kind of dream
I tried to laugh with him; it sounded more like crying

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51. Write a resume for Nurse Ratched, including her past and present accomplishments and imagining that she is looking for another job in the same field. Be sure to include a logical-sounding “reason for leaving” her current employment, and try to make Big Nurse sound as positive as possible, as if she were writing the resume herself and really trying to get another job. If you are not familiar with the proper format of a resume, use one of the templates available on the Internet and elsewhere, customizing it to suit your needs.
52. Review the novel for your school paper. Include enough detail to involve the reader but not enough to spoil the experience should they decide to read the book. Support your opinions with evidence from the novel and from what you know about good literature. For example, do you think the explicit violence, potentially offensive language, and sexually charged scenes were all necessary for the novel to be effective as art and social commentary? You might also want to include some background regarding Kesey’s drug experimentation and how that may or may not have affected his writing and his ideas. Be careful not to come across as prejudiced in your review; try to maintain your objectivity as a reporter of facts even while you render your judgment on the book, good or bad.
53. Provide written arguments offering your opinion on any of the following statements. Make sure to back up your opinion with facts from the book.
 - Ratched is crazier than any of the patients.
 - McMurphy hates strong women.
 - The ward is a microcosm for society as a whole.
 - The hospital, not Bromden’s past, caused his problems.
 - McMurphy is out only for himself.
 - McMurphy got what he deserved for trying to kill the Nurse.
54. What do you think of the title of the story? Did you understand its significance? Can you come up with a better title?

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55. If you were to tell a friend what you think the message of this novel is, what would it be?
56. When you read the last page of this novel, what were your thoughts and feelings?
57. Sometimes when a novel ends, we are sorry because we wish to spend more time with the characters we have come to know so well. In a sequel to this novel, tell what you think happens to Ratched and Bromden in the next ten years of their lives.
58. Write the dialog that might take place twenty years later when Harding and Ratched run into each other on the street.
59. Based on the novel, design and present a bumper sticker, keeping in mind the theme and setting of the book. During your presentation speech, state why you think your bumper sticker would be effective? What exactly would it accomplish? What would its effects be on most people who saw it on a car? Why? Be prepared to counter arguments against it or arguments that say it would not be as effective as you think it would be.
60. Have you had personal experience with anyone who was a patient or a worker in a hospital, whether it was a mental hospital or a standard one? If so, make a few notes in your journal so that you can share your experience with the class, if you choose to do so. Do not reveal any family secrets that would get you into trouble with your parents or guardians. (If do not have such personal experience, imagine what it must be like to work in a hospital.) How is the society within a hospital different than that outside the facility? How is it the same? Do you think that the situations portrayed in the novel are realistic? Why or why not, based on your experiences and/or knowledge of human nature?

One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest

61. What overall message did you get from the book? Write about the theme(s) of the novel, using quotes, examples, and imagery to back up your opinion. Your essay should be well organized with at least three major points and a thoughtful, memorable conclusion.

62. Taking into account your knowledge of and opinions about the novel, invent a new title for it. Then present your case for the new title in a brief essay for possible presentation to the class. Why is your title an improvement over the original? What would be the effect of your title on potential and actual readers? How would it add to the impact and meaning of the novel?

Film Version

63. View the 1975 film version of the novel (now on DVD), which stars Jack Nicholson and won five Oscars. The American Film Institute has ranked it among the top 20 U.S. films of all time. How do the characters compare to your internal vision of them as you were reading the novel? Why do you think the movie is not as dark in tone as the novel? List some ways in which director Milos Forman lightened up the mood. For instance, notice in particular how Cheswick's character is changed and how the overall plot has been rewritten.
64. Consider the following quote about the film: "I think the reason this picture has always had a youth cult [following] is that until the end it has all the elements of later comic youth films in which fun-loving and belligerent young rebels/students play pranks that cause the leaders of their institutions to have anxiety attacks" (Danny Peary, *Guide For the Film Fanatic*, 1986). Give your opinion of this comment: do you agree or disagree? What is a "comic youth film" that you have seen? Discuss it in relation to other films. What is your favorite type of film? Why?
65. What is your favorite film of all time that was based on a book? Why is it your favorite? Write a one-page review of that film as if you were writing for a newspaper or Internet journal. Include your opinion of how it compares with the book on which it is based.

Test

1. Who says the following? "I been silent so long now it's gonna roar out of me like floodwaters. . . ."
 - A. R. P. McMurphy
 - B. Chief Bromden
 - C. Dale Harding
 - D. Billy Bibbit
2. McMurphy stops his battle with Nurse Ratched when
 - A. the Chief tells him about Electric Shock Therapy.
 - B. McMurphy realizes Ratched has enough power to keep him in the hospital indefinitely.
 - C. Cheswick commits suicide.
 - D. the Chief lifts the control panel, winning McMurphy enough money that he does not think he needs to continue the battle.
3. In what state is the novel set?
 - A. Washington
 - B. California
 - C. Oregon
 - D. Oklahoma
4. What is the first thing McMurphy complains about when admitted to the hospital?
 - A. being forced to shower
 - B. being forced to take pills
 - C. being forced to strip
 - D. being forcibly committed
5. Where has McMurphy been just prior to the hospital?
 - A. a tavern
 - B. a city jail
 - C. a hotel
 - D. a prison farm

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6. Where did Nurse Ratched formerly work?
 - A. at a prison
 - B. in the army
 - C. at a standard hospital
 - D. in another state
7. What causes Ratched to send McMurphy for a lobotomy?
 - A. He is hopelessly insane.
 - B. He breaks her window.
 - C. He tries to kill her.
 - D. He helps inmates escape.
8. To what is Chief Bromden referring when he speaks of the "Combine"?
 - A. a nearby farm
 - B. the justice system
 - C. the hospital administration
 - D. the repressive society
9. Who commits suicide by drowning himself in the swimming pool?
 - A. George
 - B. Scanlon
 - C. Cheswick
 - D. Harding
10. Why does Billy Bibbit kill himself?
 - A. He is discovered with a prostitute.
 - B. He is depressed over his mother's terminal illness.
 - C. Big Nurse threatens to tell his mother he's been with a prostitute.
 - D. Nurse Ratched threatens to have him lobotomized.

One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest

11. Nurse Ratched decides to keep McMurphy on the ward after McMurphy defies her authority when he pretends to watch the world series on TV because
 - A. Dr. Spivey and the other staff members side with McMurphy.
 - B. she is secretly in love with McMurphy and cannot bear to have him removed from the ward.
 - C. she knows if she moves him to Disturbed, he will then become a martyr to the other patients.
 - D. she truly wants what is best for McMurphy, and she thinks she is the best one to help him overcome his mental illness.
12. How does the Chief know what the staff says in their meetings?
 - A. He listens through the door.
 - B. He cleans the room while they meet.
 - C. He listens through an air vent.
 - D. He figures it out by what Big Nurse says and does.
13. Who witnesses the Chief killing McMurphy?
 - A. Ratched
 - B. Harding
 - C. Scanlon
 - D. Washington
14. Why does the Chief murder McMurphy?
 - A. McMurphy has had too many shock treatments.
 - B. McMurphy has made fun of the Chief.
 - C. McMurphy has started to conform to all the rules.
 - D. McMurphy has become a Vegetable.
15. Who acts as captain of the boat during the fishing trip?
 - A. George
 - B. McMurphy
 - C. Harding
 - D. Cheswick

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16. The title of this novel
- A. is based on an old children's rhyme.
 - B. is appropriate because in the end the Chief is inspired by McMurphy's courage to escape from the mental hospital.
 - C. is an excerpt from one of the Chief's hallucinations that he is capable of flying like a goose.
 - D. Both A and B
17. Why do McMurphy and the Chief get into a fight with the orderlies?
- A. McMurphy and the Chief are protecting Billy.
 - B. McMurphy and the Chief are protecting George.
 - C. McMurphy and the Chief are trying to escape.
 - D. McMurphy and the Chief do not want shock therapy.
18. What does McMurphy give the Chief that causes him to start talking?
- A. chewing gum
 - B. a cigarette
 - C. playing cards
 - D. half the poker winnings
19. Why does the government want the land that belongs to the Chief's tribe?
- A. to build a casino
 - B. to build a highway
 - C. to build a housing development
 - D. to build a dam
20. The Chief kills McMurphy because
- A. he cannot stand to see his only friend suffering from the pain of the operation.
 - B. he knows McMurphy will never be whole again after the lobotomy and is as good as dead. When he kills McMurphy, he is only killing McMurphy's body.
 - C. McMurphy is the only one who knows the Chief can both hear and speak.
 - D. the Chief is angry with McMurphy for letting Nurse Ratched win the final battle.

One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest

Test
Student Answer Sheet

Name: _____

- | | |
|-----------|-----------|
| 1. _____ | 11. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 12. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 13. _____ |
| 4. _____ | 14. _____ |
| 5. _____ | 15. _____ |
| 6. _____ | 16. _____ |
| 7. _____ | 17. _____ |
| 8. _____ | 18. _____ |
| 9. _____ | 19. _____ |
| 10. _____ | 20. _____ |

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One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest

Test
Answer Key

1. __B__

11. __C__

2. __B__

12. __B__

3. __C__

13. __C__

4. __A__

14. __D__

5. __D__

15. __A__

6. __B__

16. __D__

7. __C__

17. __B__

8. __D__

18. __A__

9. __C__

19. __D__

10. __C__

20. __B__

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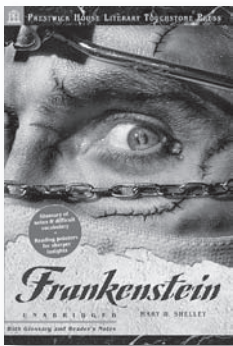
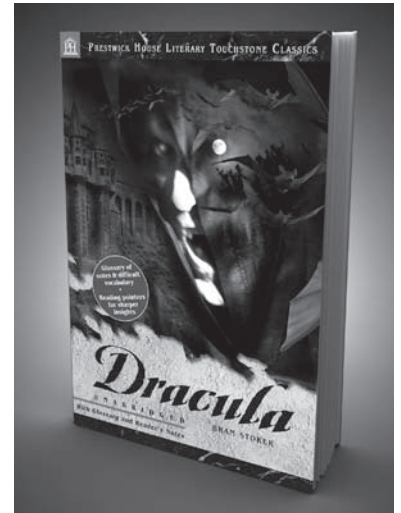
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